

**THE FAIRFAX AREA AGENCY ON AGING PRESENTS
CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE
JUNE 2006**

"Caregiver's Corner Online" is an electronic newsletter produced by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (AAA) with funding from the National Family Caregiver Support Program of the Older Americans Act. Our goal is to send you information to support you as a family caregiver for an older adult.

IN THIS EDITION:

1. June is Home Safety Month
2. Third Party Landlord Option
3. Day of Respite for Kinship
Care Families
4. Alzheimer's Family Day Center
Presents Free Classes for Caregivers
5. Grandparent Support Groups
Continue Through Summer
6. Previous Editions of "Caregiver's Corner
Online" Newsletter

1. JUNE IS HOME SAFETY MONTH--SLIPS AND FALLS ARE TOP HAZARDS FOR UNINTENTIONAL HOME INJURIES. Older adults have the greatest risk for falling injuries. If you are 65 or older, you may be only a step away from becoming a victim of the leading cause of unintentional home injury--falls. The Home Safety Council's new study, the State of Home Safety in America report, found that falls are the leading cause of unintentional home injury death and nonfatal home-related injuries than any other type of hazard in the 65 and older age group. In fact, this particular age group experiences an average of 4,700 deaths and report an average of 1.5 million nonfatal fall injuries each year. Across all age groups, falls account for 5.1 million injuries each year showing that no one is immune. However, there are a number of steps that everyone can take to identify and correct potential fall hazards in and around the home.

Home Safety "Walk-Through" What To Look For:

- **All stairs and steps should be protected with a secure banister or handrail.
- **Make sure all porches, hallways and stairwells are well lit.
- **Use the maximum safe wattage in light fixtures. (Maximum wattage is typically posted inside light fixtures.) Nightlights can help light the way during nighttime hours.
- **Keep stairs, steps, landings and all floors clear. Reduce clutter and safely tuck away telephone and electrical cords out of walkways.
- **Use a non-slip mat, or install adhesive safety strips or decals in bathtubs and showers.

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- **Install grab bars in bath and shower stalls.
- **Install window guards to prevent children from falling out of windows.
- **Keep the floor clean. Promptly clean up grease, water and other liquids.
- **Use non-skid throw rugs to reduce your chance of slipping.
- **Use a sturdy step stool with hand rails when climbing is necessary.
- **Follow medication dosages closely. Using multiple medications (4 or more) or using medications incorrectly may lead to dizziness, weakness and other side effects. These can all lead to a dangerous fall.
- **In homes with children, make sure toys and other items are safely put away when not in use, and use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs if very young children are present.

This article is provided by the Home Safety Council, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to helping prevent the more than 21 million medical visits on average that occur each year from unintentional injuries in the home. Through national programs and partners across America, the Home Safety Council works to educate and empower families to take actions that help keep them safe in and around their homes.

2. THIRD PARTY LANDLORD OPTION. As of July 1, most Virginia tenants will have a new option available to them. They will be able to designate a third party to receive duplicate copies of notices from the landlord as well as copies of any unlawful detainers (an unlawful detainer is a paper filed in court by the landlord to begin the eviction process). A third party could be a family member, a close friend, or possibly a case manager or social service agency. If the tenant designates such a person, then the landlord will be required to send notices of problems to that person as well as to the tenant himself. The hope is that this new option will be particularly helpful to elderly or disabled tenants who might occasionally need help remembering to pay the rent or who might be in and out of the hospital and therefore unable to pay the rent when it comes due.

The third party notice ensures that someone besides the tenant is made aware of any problems under the lease--including not only rent, but also any other violations of the lease--so that the third party can get involved to correct the problem early in the process before the landlord begins eviction proceedings. Since the designated third party should also receive copies of an unlawful detainer filed by the landlord, he or she could also intervene at that stage to try to resolve problems before the tenant is faced with eviction.

The third party will not be legally liable for the tenant's rent or for any other problems under the lease. The third party will not have any legal obligation to do anything. Hopefully, however, the tenant will choose someone who is concerned about the tenant's welfare and who will want to help get problems corrected before it's too late. It is important that the tenant choose someone who will pay attention if they receive a copy of a notice from a landlord about a problem and who will make every effort to work with the tenant to promptly resolve any problems with the landlord. The tenant should talk to the person in advance to be sure he or she is willing to receive the notices.

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If you are a tenant who is interested in designating a third party, contact your landlord in late June or soon after July 1 to give him or her the name, address and phone number of the person you want to name to receive copies of the notices. Since this is a new law, landlords may not be aware of it yet, so you may need to educate your landlord about the new provision. Tell your landlord this is a new law found at Virginia Code Section 55-248.9:1.B, which goes into effect on July 1.

Even if you do not think you need assistance now, consider naming a close family member or friend so that the landlord has a contact should problems arise down the road. You never know when you may need help, and it is best to have named someone and have this designation already in place before you run into problems and need help. If you are a concerned family member or friend who knows someone who could benefit from the third party designation, please talk with the tenant about this option now and encourage the tenant to contact the landlord to designate a third party.

Because this is an option for tenants, but not something a tenant is required to do, the tenant must take the first step by notifying the landlord if he wants to designate a third party and by giving the landlord the name, address and phone number of the designated person or agency. Nothing will happen unless the tenant contacts the landlord with the name and address of the designated third party so that the landlord knows to whom duplicate notices should be sent.

If you have questions about the third party option, call your local legal aid office. In Fairfax County, contact Legal Services of Northern Virginia, 703-246-4500 or Potomac Legal Aid, 703-532-2525.

3. DAY OF RESPITE FOR KINSHIP CARE FAMILIES. Are you a grandparent or other relative raising a minor relative? Want a break, a day for yourself, as well as a fun day for your children? Enjoy a free day of respite. Drop off your children, ages 3 and up, for a fun day of recreation. Then use your free time however you want--to shop, to rest, to attend a movie, whatever. Trained and dedicated staff will provide child care and lead activities.

When: Saturday, August 19
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place: Gum Springs Community Center,
8100 Fordson Road, Alexandria, VA 22306

Pre-registration is required. Call 703-324-5205 with questions or for registration information. Respite Day is being offered as a joint project of the Department of Community and Recreation Services, the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, the Fairfax County Public Schools, the Kinship Care Committee of Fairfax County, and the Fairfax County Department of Systems Management for Human Services.

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4. ALZHEIMER'S FAMILY DAY CENTER PRESENTS FREE CLASSES FOR

CAREGIVERS. These classes are geared toward families who are currently taking care of a relative or friend with memory loss. Professional care providers are also welcome to attend.

All sessions are at Alzheimer's Family Day Center, 2812 Old Lee Highway, Suite 210, Fairfax, and run from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.:

- First Steps for Caregivers Near and Far, July 11
- Communication and Behavior, July 18
- Financial Aspects of Caregiving, July 25
- Travel and Dementia, August 1

Reservations are required. Please call Anna at 703-204-4664. Free respite care is available on request.

5. GRANDPARENT SUPPORT GROUPS CONTINUE THROUGH SUMMER. If you or someone you know provides custodial care for minor relatives, the kinship care support groups are a way to touch base with other such caregivers. Sponsored by the Fairfax County Department of Family Services and Fairfax County Public Schools, Family Services and Involvement Section, groups are meeting as follows:

- Bryant Alternative High School, 2709 Popkins Lane, Alexandria;
One Thursday per month in June, July, and August.
- Pennino Human Services Building, 12011 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax;
Two Tuesdays per month in June, July, and August.

Childcare is provided for those who are pre-registered. For details, please call Robin Hamby at 703-277-2640 or Colleen Turner at 703-324-5489; TTY 703-449-1186.

6. PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF "CAREGIVER'S CORNER ONLINE" NEWSLETTER. Current and past editions of the "Caregiver's Corner Online" newsletter are available online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa/caregivers_corner_nl.htm.

Please note that these items are included for informational purposes only and do not imply endorsement by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging or Fairfax County Government.

For further information, please contact an Aging Information Specialist at the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (telephone: 703-324-7948; TTY 703-449-1186 or e-mail: fairfax_aaa@fairfaxcounty.gov). Visit our Web site at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/aaa/.
